



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
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Dear Families,

Early Intervention (EI) is a developmental service available to eligible children and families between birth and three years of age. EI provides family-centered services to help children progress in their development and enhance a family's ability to meet the needs of their child.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is the state agency that oversees the statewide system of Early Intervention services. We are writing to explain some changes within the Early Intervention program.

Changes to Eligibility Criteria for Children Eligible Based on Developmental Delay:

Eligibility for Early Intervention is determined when a team of two or more EI staff uses a developmental tool and gathers information about a child's development. The developmental tools that are approved by DPH to determine eligibility by delay are the Early Intervention Developmental Profile (the "Michigan") or the Battelle Developmental Inventory – 2 (BDI-2 – the "Battelle").

As of **January 1, 2009**, a child will need to show a **30% level of delay** (based on the Michigan) or score **1.5 standard deviations below the norm** (based on the Battelle). The delay may be in one or more areas of development, including cognition, gross or fine motor, communication, social/emotional, or adaptive development.

All children referred and evaluated as of January 1, 2009 will need to have either a 30% level of delay or score 1.5 standard deviations below the norm. Children enrolled in EI before January 1, 2009 will continue to be eligible until their next eligibility evaluation is completed. At that time, a child would need to show a delay of 30% or score 1.5 standard deviation below the norm to continue to be eligible for Early Intervention.

Children in other eligibility categories are not affected by this policy change. This includes children with a diagnosis on the *Massachusetts Early Intervention Diagnosed Conditions List* and children or families with four of the risk factors listed in the Early Intervention Operational Standards.

If you have questions, please speak with your Early Intervention program or Mary Dennehy-Colorusso at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at 978-851-7261, TTY 978-851-0829 or mary.dennehy-colorusso@state.ma.us

Changes in Eligibility for Autism Specialty Services Programs:

The MDPH has revised the eligibility for Specialty Services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. As of **January 1, 2009** a child must have a **confirmed diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder** to be eligible to receive services from a Specialty Services Program (SSP).

As of January 1, 2009 a developmental tool meant to screen for Autism Spectrum Disorder will no longer make a child eligible to receive Specialty Services. A positive finding on a screening tool does not always mean a child has Autism Spectrum Disorder. A diagnosis must be made by a professional who has training and experience in this field. Professionals with experience to diagnose ASD may include developmental pediatricians, neurologists or clinical psychologists. Early Intervention staff can help by providing names and telephone numbers of professionals who specialize in diagnosing Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Children must have a confirmed diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder according to the DSM-IV Diagnostic Criteria to be referred to Specialty Services Programs (SPP). Once a diagnosis is confirmed, a referral may be made to an SPP by either the Early Intervention program or the family. Written documentation of the confirmed diagnosis based on the DSM-IV Diagnostic Criteria must be filed in both the child's EI record and the Specialty Services Program record.

Please contact Tracy Osbahr, at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at 413/586-7525, TTY: (800) 769-9991 or tracy.osbahr@state.ma.us if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Ron Benham

Ron Benham
Part C Coordinator
Acting Director, Bureau of Family Health & Nutrition